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Book Review: Lindsey R. Swindall, *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World: Southern Civil Rights and Anticolonialism*

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Lindsey R. Swindall, *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World: Southern Civil Rights and Anticolonialism, 1937–1955*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014. Pp. 238. Cloth \$69.95.

Lindsey R. Swindall's *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World* situates the social activism of the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC) and the Council on African Affairs (CAA) within the historical context of the radical social justice campaigns in the U.S. South and the global anticolonial struggles. The book's title

derives from W. E. B. Du Bois's 1946 speech "Behold the Land" at the SNYC meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, where the eminent scholar-activist argued that the equal rights campaigns in the U.S. South should not be viewed in isolation from movements taking place in the West Indies and Africa. Swindall's sociopolitical history is supported by an impressive array of archival collections and NAACP and SNYC records. Contributing to the literature on black freedom struggles in the United States and the global South, Swindall argues that by examining SNYC and CAA together, scholars can consider "the intergenerational nature of civil rights and labor organizing" at mid-century and develop a more complex definition of a "southern activist" or a "southern organization."

Chronicling the work of SNYC and CAA from their founding in the economic depression of the 1930s to the early years of the Cold War, *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World* examines how these groups employed Pan-Africanist ideology and developed organizational responses to white racism and white supremacy. While emerging within slightly different contexts, SNYC from economic hardships of the Great Depression and CAA from the "ruthless discrimination against native black South Africans," both groups conceptualized the struggle for black rights from a global perspective. According to Swindall, "The SNYC developed an international vision" that conceptualized the organized resistance of African Americans, particularly the labor organizing, the anti-lynching campaigns, voter registration, and the desegregation of public facilities in the U.S. South "as part of a broader struggle for liberation throughout the African diaspora." The African Diaspora functioned as a unifying concept for the two groups, especially as CAA's antifascist and anticolonial politics gained ground in the early 1940s.

Dissecting the language of the Atlantic Charter and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" address, both in 1941, Swindall discusses how these statements shaped the language of citizenship rights used by SNYC and CAA during the war years. Both groups' growing popular appeal at that time coincided with the Allied Powers' antifascist worldview. Examining the political landscape surrounding the 1947 Freedom Train exhibit marking "the 160th anniversary of the signing of the [U.S.] Constitution," Swindall explains how "the global conceptualization of freedom" cultivated by SNYC and CAA was negated in the Freedom Train exhibit where the concept of freedom became increasingly "linked with the notion of national loyalty." For example, while the American Heritage Foundation publicly denounced segregation at "any Freedom Train stop," it was on full display "in cities in South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia." Swindall argues that in the immediate aftermath of World War II, "defining the idea of freedom was not only partisan, but also reflective of deepening fissures in U.S. society."

During the war, the two groups' affiliation with the Communist Party was accepted, given the inclusion of the Soviet Union in the Allied Powers. The creation of two

leftist publications, the newspaper *Freedom* and *Freedomways* magazine, revealed “how organizers and writers persisted in creating outlets from which to advocate for both southern civil rights and colonial freedom for Africa” in the anti-communist political environment of the early 1950s. While short-lived, these two publications offered critiques of the war in Korea and reported on international peace conferences, demonstrating their global conception of African and African American affairs.

Swindall also raises questions about the role of women in the organizational structures of SNYC and CAA. Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Nora Wilson’s participation in SNYC campaigns, international conferences, and organizational meetings reveals the essential and diverse roles women played in radical leftist organizations. Further consideration of the impact of the war on women’s leadership roles may shed light on the increasing visibility of women in radical organizing in the 1940s and the 1960s. *The Path to the Greater, Freer, Truer World* invites scholars and students of social movements to consider the global intersectionality of two under-examined equal rights organizations of the 20th century, placing the scholarship on the southern civil rights campaigns in conversation with works on the anticolonial struggles in the global South.

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Christine Knauer, *Let Us Fight as Free Men: Black Soldiers and Civil Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Pp. 341. Cloth \$39.86.

Christine Knauer’s *Let Us Fight as Free Men* is a noteworthy contribution to literature on African American soldiers’ fight for equality within the U.S. military after World War II. Knauer effectively uses a range of sources—newspaper articles, journals, books, and personal papers—to reveal the painstaking struggles African Americans endured to achieve parity within the U.S. armed forces. The objective of *Let Us Fight as Free Men* is to highlight “African American ideas and discussion on military service and the struggle for racial integration in the armed forces after the Second World War as formative elements of both the postwar civil rights movement and the African American community.” Knauer uses her evidence to support the claim that African Americans, both on the battlefield and within civil society, demanded that the U.S. military to treat all soldiers fairly.

At the outset, *Let Us Fight as Free Men* highlights the relationship between African Americans and the U.S. military during World War II and reveals that the